

Today's Topics:

Hams and Emergencies (was Re: Letter from the FCC:)

New callbook stats

Spy numbers transmissions

Date: 13 Nov 89 04:15:42 GMTFrom: gem.mps.ohio-state.edu!samsung!caesar.cs.montana.edu!ogccse!emory!stiatl!
rsiatl!jgd@tut.cis.ohio-state.edu (John G. De Armond)

Subject: Hams and Emergencies (was Re: Letter from the FCC:)

In article <2514@wyse.wyse.com> stevew@wyse.UUCP (Steve Wilson xttemp dept303)
writes:

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>I've got a real problem with this point of view. I've just come off
>a week stint of providing emergency service to several agencies. The
>thing you guys keep forgetting is that a disaster by definition is
>when all of your normal capabilities in what ever capacity are
>BROKEN/EXCEEDED. Hams have in the past, and are currently providing
>the required communications capability when the normal circuits
>aren't enough, or circuit requirements come into being spontaneously.
>Maybe I'm not being clear. There is NO reason EVER for your
communications facilities to be broken or exceeded. Not with proper
planning and preparation. I don't mean to say here that all possible needs
can be addressed, simply that with proper planning and with modern
communications facilities, the core requirements CAN be handled even in
an "emergency". I'll explain below.>Example 1. The city of Hollister's EOC/Comm facility wasn't usable
>for something like a week. Two different Com Vans built
>Example 3. The EOC in the City of Los Gatos was initially not deemed
>habitable. They wound up setting up their operation outside.There is really little excuse for this to happen. How can any emergency
agency use EOC facilities that have even the remotest possibility of
failure in what has to be one of the most likely emergencies on the
west coast? I know how much federal money has been available in
the last 10 years for EOC upgrades. This is criminal.Look, In Tennessee, it took a major loss of life due to official neglect
and negligence (Waverly Propane Explosion) to snap the state to its senses.
Since that tragic event, the state has built an Emergency Management
Agency second to none. The awards prove it. IT has been done with a
lot of state money, some federal dollars, a bit of the Tennessee

Valley Authority money (nuclear plants and all), and a whole hell of a lot of sweat and labor by a host of volunteers. WE plan for earthquakes and build our EOCs appropriately even though the last time the New Madrid Fault acted up was a hundred years ago. Sure our EOC could take a hit of some kind but we have contingency plans for these things.

But more to the point. I don't for an instant want to be perceived as taking away even the tiniest bit from what Hams have done in disasters. What I am trying to do is to get all hams to look at the service like the outside world is prone to do.

Try to put yourself in an emergency manager's position. I used hams as radiation monitors because a) they were available and b) they supplied much of their own equipment. Now, we make a big deal about the radios we supply and the fact that a relatively large number of us are around at any moment. But compare that to what volunteer firemen and rescue members do routinely. It is typical for a fireman or rescue squad member to supply his full turnout gear. He will supply a radio and the vehicle to mount it in as well as siren and lights. Some departments pay a small stipend (\$10 per turnout in our old VF department) which does nothing to compensate for the outlay.

So when a ham shows up for emergency service and expects to be treated special just because he has supplied a RADIO .. and maybe an ANTENNA, or even, god forbid, a power supply, he should not be surprised that the people in the other services aren't impressed. My view as a manager is that the radio is simply a necessary part of the ham's turnout gear.

I suppose part of this phenomena I discuss is so prevelant is that the ranks really ARE getting old. I'm a relative newcommer with about 15 years of service. Yet, I can remember when a mobile radio consisted of a Motorola twin-V converted from dynamotor to vibrator or even better, solid state supply. Back then, a private citizen with a radio of any kind was something special. One that could talk through a repeater or around the world was phenomenal. Nowadays anybody with a couple hundred dollars can get a cellular phone or VHF H-T. Portable ground stations are not that much more expensive. So the ham with his typically bad operating habits, poor preparation, and (sometimes) poor disposition are grossly out of place.

But let's look a bit further. One complaint I've heard over and over is that hams always have their hands out for special treatment, money or other consideration. They scream for special siting consideration and/or rent-free repeater sites. They want the locality to buy equipment to place in various communications sites. Sometimes they even want the local government to pay for installation and maintenance. I have specific examples in mind when I say this, but I see no need in calling

names.

So when I approach the Director or County Concilmen for amateur radio support (Yes, contrary to the opinion that may have developed thus far, I have gone to the mat many times for amateur radio), I have several uncomfortable questions to answer. The first is "why don't we spend the money on radios that all our men can use, not just a few people?" and "Why should we help people who show up only once a year before we equip our full time firemen and rescue squad members?" Those, people, are very hard to answer in amateur radio's favor. I usually respond with something like "Well, there ARE hundreds of them available if needed." along with "Hey, they really aren't as bad as they sound on the scanner. They DO help in an emergency." I ususally managed to get a bit of funding or the letter written but not much more. We should all remember that the scanner nut or SWL listener may also hold some position of real importance in real life.

I remember once incident in which we were experimenting with hams being weather spotters. We were under a tornado warning. I and one other person were manning the EOC. Some idiot with a callsign (I hesitate to call him a ham) reported over the local repeater a rain squall as a tornado. He was immediately contradicted by several other hams in the vicinity. Nonetheless, our phones and those at the police, fire and radio stations literally exploded off the wall! There must have been hundreds of citizens listening to the ham repeater on scanners for information. The EOC was paralyzed for a time. All our phone lines were clogged, preventing us from initiating the phone tree when a real tornado was spotted across town. On the bright side, I WAS able to justify some outgoing-only lines :-). A few examples like this is all it takes to kill years of carefully constructed goodwill from in local government. (And I won't even get into the unguyed tower colocated with the police repeater that fell and took the police tower down. Boo!)

In spite of these examples, I feel we do much more good than harm. But we ARE NOT indispensable. To realize that, imagine that ham radio either did not exist or else it went away completely one day. I'm still charged with a mission. I need communications during emergencies in order to accomplish my mission. The crucial question for hams is Can I do it? The answer is YES. Assume for the moment, I have the power to set federal policy.

The first thing I'd do is set up a civilian communications corps. I'd monitor it along the lines of the CAP or MARS. I'd give the ordinary citizen the right to own radios capable of long distance communications in return for a minimum level of service. And I'd fund the program sufficiently to ensure a statistically significant number of radios in the population.

In order to avoid the CB debacle, I'd take several steps. First, I'd

lay technical specifications down such that each and every radio could be controlled remotely similiar to cellular. That way, I could reserve channel blocks for ONLY emergency use AND I could disable any transmitter whose operator was abusing the rules. It has worked for cellular so why not here.

Next, I'd set up a series of community communications committees with paid membership, charged with overseeing the operation of the CCC on a local level. I'd equip these committees with real enforcement teeth and institute a reward program that rewards people for turning in gross violators. Draconian? Yes. Unamerican? Perhaps. Would it work? Just ask the IRS.

Next, I'd take the proceeds from commercial users' fees and do properly many of the things hams do half-assed. I'd equip all emergency facilities with radio equipment. I'd put mobile comm vans in the communities, probably with the fire departments or the like. And I'd recruit people to operate this equipment by using the above incentives AND by paying them for their service, a la the National Guards and the Reserves.

The benefits to the public good would be manifold. We'd have a cadre of trained and equipped operators ready for service at a moment's notice. (Funny how that phrase fit :-) We'd have guaranteed compatable equipment, maintained professionally, and kept on hand in sufficient quantities that appliance operators could use them until they broke and then discard them back to repair depots. The only requirement to participate would be a minimum level of service. And the centerpiece of capitalism, money, would drive many people.

You will notice that each element of my imaginary service is either a rehash of old or existing programs or simple extentions thereof. No radically new political thinking or technical breakthrough is necessary. In fact, this is just the kind of thing some congressional staffer could pick up and run with. Think of the populist appeal. "A radio in every car, a chicken in every pot :-)"

I've undertaken this rather verbose exercise in the hope that it will make at least a few hams realize that we are not so all-important that we cannot be replaced. We ARE exposed at the moment from several angles. Our frequencies are becomming increasingly valuable as other spectrum runs out. We ARE a minority. Unlike the more visible minorities, we have no media support. We are sitting ducks. And the LAST thing we need is the FCC to be our enemy.

>As for giving into the FCC, it seems that they keep forgetting
>that they work for the public, and this type of operation is nothing
>but for the public good! If they would simply bust some jerks instead
>of making more things illegal when they aren't willing/capable to
>enforce the laws that are ALREADY on the books things would be

>alot more civil.

>

Yes, the FCC does nominally serve the public. I'm personally thankful the coupling to populism, which is your advocacy, is loose. If the FCC were to REALLY serve the non-ham MAJORITY of communications users, we'd be out of ALL our bands in a New York Second! I'd suggest that we try to recultivate a positive relationship with the FCC instead of fighting them at every turn. I'd suggest we embrace the no-code license class that they clearly want and drop the 220 stuff. Sure, we might wind the tiny battle of the 220 band but I'll guarantee we'll loose the war. My PERSONAL opinion developed from private conversations with various FCC people is that the Commission looks at Ham radio as a convenient babysitter for our frequencies. We keep them out of military, other government, and inappropriate commercial use until they are needed for something else. You are free to disagree with this opinion but if you do, don't wake up hollering someday when your favorite band is gone.

Well, this has ended up being quite long, much longer than I planned. I thank those that bore with me to here. Whether or not you agree, I hope I've at least caused you to think a bit.

73 john

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John De Armond, WD40QC	Manual? ... What manual !!?
Radiation Systems, Inc.	This is Unix, My son, You
emory!rsiatl!jgd	just GOTTA Know!!!

Date: 13 Nov 89 01:13:00 GMT
From: ka9q.bellcore.com!karn@bellcore.com (Phil Karn)
Subject: New callbook stats

I note that the 1988 version of Rusty's database has 480,105 entries. The new one I just received has 488,041. That would appear to be a growth of 1.65% over last year. But even this anemic figure is too high. The FCC hasn't been too swift about deleting silent keys (N5PS is still listed, for example) and the switch from 5 to 10-year license terms means that NO licenses expired during 1989. So I'd say that our actual growth was, in all likelihood, negative.

By the way, my copy of this year's callbook is about 5 megabytes smaller than last year's: 43,160,647 bytes vs 48,180,089. One change had already been made to it when I received it - the three date fields are now expressed in the form yyddd instead of mm/dd/yy, which saves about 6 bytes on average

from each entry. I then made several changes of my own: deleting all "*" characters (they're redundant, since a null field can mean the same thing), deleting the superfluous spaces found at the start of some previous-callsign entries, and deleting runs of "|" at the end of a line.

I've modified my own formatting software to work with this leaner format. It's still backward compatible with last year's database format, however.

I've placed a compressed CPIO archive of my callbook software on flash.bellcore.com (128.96.32.20) for anonymous FTP. The file name is /pub/ka9q/callbook.cpio.Z. Have fun.

Phil

Date: 13 Nov 89 00:38:06 GMT
From: opus!eiverson@lanl.gov (Eric Iverson)
Subject: Spy numbers transmissions

William Poundstone devotes a chapter to this in his book "Big Secrets"

-Gruntpig

End of INFO-HAMS Digest V89 Issue #872
